

Iowa Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Commission

ITEM

22

INFORMATION

TOPIC **Project AWARE Update**

Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness and River Expedition) 2005 was held June 18-25 (<http://www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/aware/05aware.html>). This event marks the third Project AWARE event. This presentation will provide an update on the accomplishments of this initiative in its third year and highlight the upcoming 2006 Project AWARE event to be held June 17-24.

One of the most notable achievements, as with last year, was our successful recycling efforts. This year we aim to recycle 85% of the trash collected during this event. This is an event that involves the coordination and partnership of many partnering organizations and specifically many DNR employees among all departmental divisions.

Project Background:

Prompted by the department's IOWATER program whose mission is to empower Iowa's citizens to monitor water quality across the state and in partnership with the department's Keepers of the Land Volunteer Program that strives to bring Iowans closer to their natural environment through volunteer experiences, Project AWARE came about as a way to offer a group of volunteers the opportunity to be involved, via canoes and kayaks, in a week-long, highly visible, impactful, and intensive river clean-up, and water quality monitoring event. The following objectives have guided its planning and implementation.

- Increase awareness about water quality issues that threaten the health of Iowa's water resources, and promote advocacy and action towards their improvement and protection.
- Involve Iowa's citizen volunteers in an action project that produces a tangible, quantitative result (numbers of citizens involved and quantity of trash removed, recycled, reused, or properly disposed of).
- Emphasize the importance of partnerships by involving anyone and everyone who wants to be involved, including local, county, state, and federal agencies, businesses, and human-interest groups.
- Show the state of Iowa that its citizens are serious, concerned, and willing to make a difference - one stretch of river, one piece of trash at a time.

Project AWARE focuses on primary state waterways that are considered impaired with regard to water quality and overall health and integrity. This, as well as the intention of Project AWARE to provide tangible results to the entire state, is reflected through the event's mobile-minded implementation.

- In 2003 Project AWARE focused on 112 miles of the Maquoketa River in eastern Iowa...stretching from Backbone State Park to the Mississippi River near Green Island.
- In 2004 Project AWARE focused on 107 miles of the Des Moines River Watershed and central Iowa...reviving an area reaching from Gotch State Park to Prospect Park in the heart of Des Moines.
- In 2005 Project AWARE focused on 96 miles of the Little Sioux River in northwestern Iowa... stretching from Spencer to Cherokee.
- This year's event is scheduled for June 17-24 on the South Iowa River in southeastern Iowa.

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April 21, 2006